



2023 The Alberni Valley's  
**Vital Signs®**



*The Alberni Valley  
Community Foundation*

# Message from the Board Chair

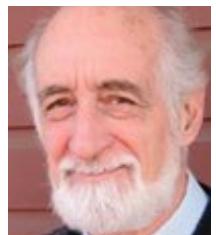
As life returns to somewhat normal we are pleased to publish a full Vital Signs this year. Since the last full report in 2018 we have endured a pandemic, an opioid crisis, climate change and housing shortages. Sadly we are still trying to deal with some of those issues today but progress is being made: the pandemic is mostly behind us; governments at all levels appear to recognize the seriousness of the opioid issue; more needs to be done by all of us to reverse the warming trend; Alberni is experiencing a tremendous increase in housing construction which undoubtedly will help alleviate the housing shortage.

The information in these reports help us and many other agencies to make informed decisions as to where we place our resources. The support of my very talented and enthusiastic Board continue to give me every hope for the future in this valley we call home.

## Hugh Grist, Board Chair

Alberni Valley Community Foundation

## Alberni Valley Community Foundation Board Members:



**Hugh Grist**  
Chair



**John Mayba**  
Grants Committee



**Peggy Hartman**  
Treasurer



**Ken Watson**



**Robert Gunn**



**Jean McIntosh**



**Jaime Hillman**



**Marta Williamson**



**Suzanne Dubé**



**Don Jones**

The Alberni Valley Community Foundation would like to acknowledge that the geographical scope of this report is within the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Hupacasath and Tseshahat people.

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# About The VitalSigns® Program

Vital Signs® is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada. It measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and supports action on issues that are critical to our quality of life. For more information, please visit <https://communityfoundations.ca/initiatives/vital-signs/>.

## Why a VitalSigns® Report?

By compiling local information and tracking it over time, we will deepen our community knowledge and provide a valuable tool for our foundation, residents, elected officials, and other community groups, giving us a basis from which to develop innovative ideas that build a stronger Alberni Valley.

## How is the report organized?

The Vital Signs® report examines quality of life through a number of different lenses, or issue areas. We are committed to monitoring and reporting on issues that impact life for all in our community. In each issue area, several indicators are presented. Indicators act as measurement tools, demonstrating how the Alberni Valley has changed over time. Where possible, we have offered comparisons to historical data, other communities, and provincial and/or national statistics.

## Data and Indicators

### Data

Some of the data within this report was collected through data provided by the CFC. Where possible, it has been verified by local experts in each issue area. Additional information was provided by local agencies and organizations. All data sources are listed on page 27.

### Indicator Selection

Indicators were selected and prioritized based on the following guidelines:

#### Indicator Characteristics

- Perceived public interest (informed by community survey and consultations)
- Indicator's ability to inspire action
- Indicator reports on an issue or trend that community members can do something about
- Indicator reveals a strength or weakness of the Alberni Valley

#### Data Selection

- Understandable
- Measureable
- Ease of collection
- Currency
- Frequency of collection in future

## What is the Alberni Valley?

For the purposes of this report, the Alberni Valley is defined as the City of Port Alberni, Alberni Clayoquot Regional District electoral areas B (Beaufort), D (Sproat Lake), E (Beaver Creek), and F (Cherry Creek), and the Tsahaheh 1, Ahahswinis 1, Alberni 1, and Klehkoot 2 reservations. All efforts have been made to obtain data for this geographic area, but occasionally different geographic areas are measured. This will be noted.

## Community Foundations of Canada

The Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) oversees the development of all 191 community foundations across Canada. CFC also coordinates the Vital Signs® program, and provides some of the data included in this report.

## Community Survey

Throughout Spring 2023, we ran a survey to better understand how local residents feel about the pressing issues in our community. In total, 293 community members participated in the survey. The demographics of survey respondents were closely aligned to the demographics of the Alberni Valley. The survey is statistically valid, but survey responses are presented under the heading "Community Voices" and not with the indicator data.

# The AVCF and the Community Social Planning Council

Our Foundation is registered with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. It is governed by an appointed Board of Volunteers, who are knowledgeable about local needs and recognized for their financial stewardship and community leadership. Assets will grow each year and the Foundation is then able to support local organizations serving youth, seniors, health, arts and culture as well as education, recreation and the environment within the Alberni Valley.

## AVCF Mission:

"The Alberni Valley has been a source of economic, social and cultural wealth for its people. The Alberni Valley Community Foundation provides a unique opportunity for citizens and organizations to make a tangible and lasting contribution in support of our Community's visions and actions."

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The Community Social Planning Council leads community based research and social programs to address social issues, alleviate poverty and promote social and environmental sustainability. This report was supported by the Community Council's Happiness and Wellbeing Lab Project, a partnership with the United Way of South Vancouver Island.

Founded in 1936, the organization has adapted to address emerging social needs. We support local governments and agencies from our strong community basis as a non-profit, non-partisan and charitable social planning society.

Since its founding, as an agency to address the needs of the poor during the Great Depression, the Council has served as the incubator for a number of well-established organizations, including the United Way of Southern Vancouver Island, Volunteer Victoria and the Bridges for Women Society.



# Report Highlights

## Our Valley - Page 5

The population of the Alberni Valley grew by 4.5% from 24,669 in 2016 to 25,786 in 2021. The median age in the Alberni Valley was nearly unchanged at 50.0, older than the provincial and national averages.

## Environment - Page 10

Residents expressed extreme concern regarding climate change and the effects it could have on the Alberni Valley; wildfires were the main concern, followed by heat waves and destruction of animal habitats.

## Housing - Pages 17-19

An affordability crisis is in full effect: the average price for a home increased nearly 60% from 2018, and 39.9% of tenants are spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

## Seniors - Page 25

The 75+ age group is expected to have the highest growth rate over the next 20 years; projected to more than double, while the 65-74 year age group is anticipated to initially increase and then decline.

## COVID Impacts

COVID effects can be seen across the data, particularly the census 2020. This needs to be considered in any data interpretation. Where possible researchers relied on available data from 2022/23 and the Community survey to reflect the recovery.



# Our Valley

## 25,786 Population

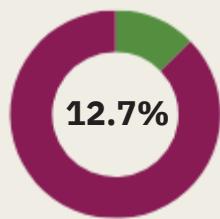
The population of the Alberni Valley grew by 4.5% from 24,669 in 2016 to 25,786 in 2021. Neighbouring regional districts including Nanaimo Regional District and the Comox Valley Regional District grew by 9.4% and 8.9%, respectively, while the provincial population increased by 7.6%.<sup>1</sup>

## 50 Median age



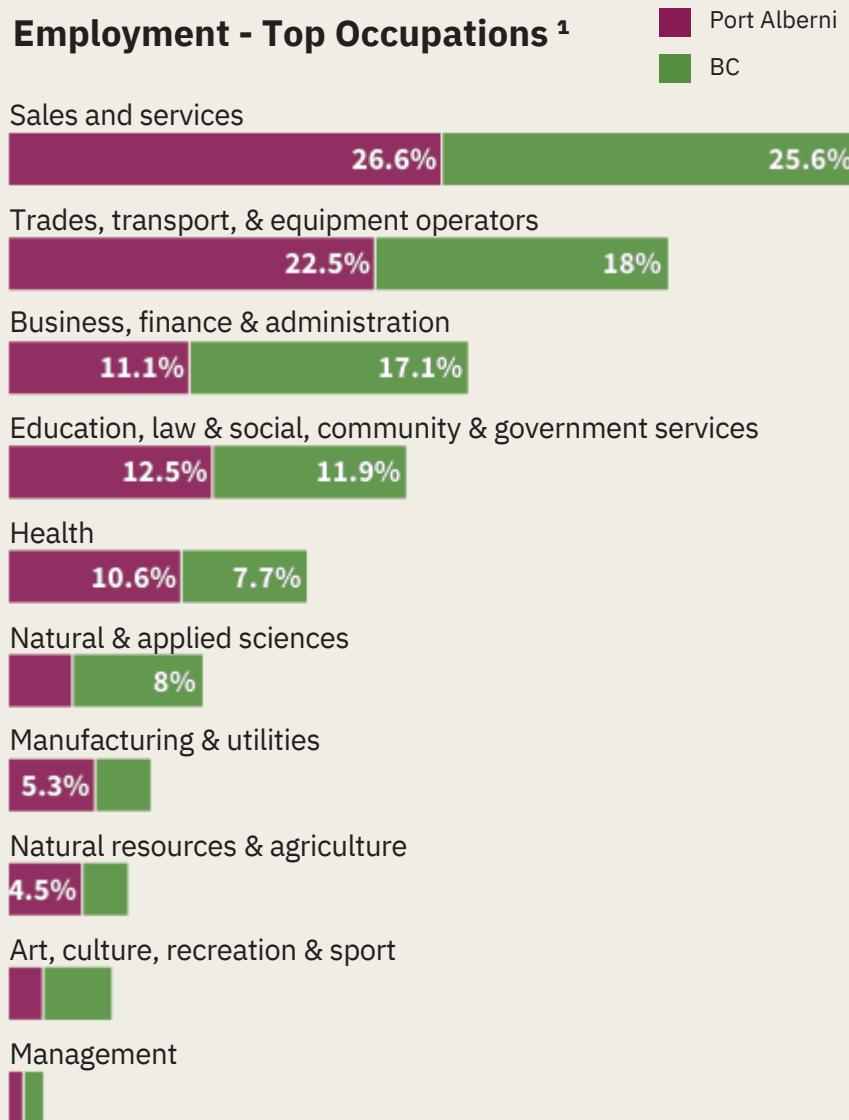
The median age in the Alberni Valley was nearly unchanged from 2016 (49.6) to 2021 (50.0). Our community is older than the provincial median (42.8) and the national median (41.6).<sup>1</sup>

## Indigenous identity



More than 4000 Alberni Valley residents, or 12.7% of the total population, identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, or Inuit). Although this is a decrease from 2016 (16.8%), the number of people who identify as Indigenous has grown, just not as fast as the general population in Port Alberni. In British Columbia, 5.8% of the population identifies as Indigenous. The Alberni Valley lies within the traditional territories of Hupačasath and Tseshah First Nations. They speak Nuu-Chah-Nulth.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Employment - Top Occupations<sup>1</sup>





# Power of Service

## Salvation Army and Bread of Life Centre

The Salvation Army and the Bread of Life forged a great partnership just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that they have strengthened over the years. The collaboration utilized many drivers to take food, hygiene materials, and other necessities straight to people's homes: dozens of drivers, delivering hundreds of meals and other necessities each day. On top of providing these services they were also able to open a warming/cooling centre and now operate a full service 25 bed shelter. They have laundry, washroom and shower facilities, and a full kitchen from which they serve up to 800 meals each day.<sup>3</sup>



# Community Voices

## Black, Indigenous, and people of colour have equal opportunities in the Alberni Valley



10.1%	Strongly Agree
26.8%	Agree
27.9%	Disagree
7.0%	Strongly Disagree
26.8%	Don't know
1.4%	Prefer not to say

## Indigenous values, cultures, and traditions are important to learn about.



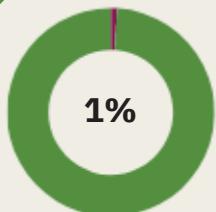
46.0%	Strongly Agree
42.6%	Agree
3.5%	Disagree
2.4%	Strongly Disagree
2.4%	Don't know
3.1%	Prefer not to say

## \$61,200 Median income of household, after tax

In 2020, Alberni Valley households reported a median income of \$61,200, after taxes were deducted. This is a notable increase from 2018 (\$49,609). In both instances, the Alberni Valley lags behind the province – in 2020, the provincial median was \$76,000. Nationally, households reported an after-tax income of \$73,000.<sup>1</sup>

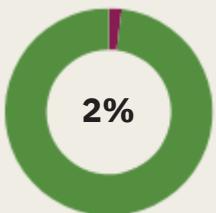


# Arts & Culture



## Education in the Arts

Just over one in one hundred adults ages 25-64 in the Alberni Valley have post-secondary training in the arts (visual or performing). Across the province, 2.8% of people ages 25-64 have an arts education.<sup>1</sup>



## Employment in cultural occupations

The proportion of residents working in arts, culture, recreation, and sports fell from 2.4% in 2016. This is lower than the provincial rate of 4.2% and the national rate of 3.1%.<sup>1</sup>

## 5,165 Active library cardholders in 2022<sup>4</sup>

The Port Alberni library is a vital community amenity. The following metrics demonstrate the library's impact and importance to Port Alberni residents:

- 1,219 new cards were issued in 2022
- The branch had a Satisfaction Score of 9.6/10 in 2022
- Total Circulation of hard copy books, video games, and DVDs in 2022 was 86,172 items.
- Port Alberni library is also a hub of activity. Close to 1,500 people attended free events in the library to support literacy and early learning in 2022.
- The amount of active library cardholders has decreased from 7506 in 2018.



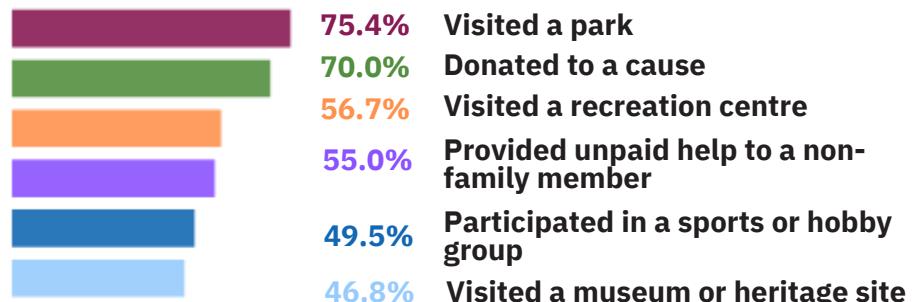
# Community Voices



## I can afford to participate in local arts and culture events.

22.9%	Strongly Agree
50.4%	Agree
10.4%	Disagree
4.5%	Strongly Disagree
10.1%	Don't know
1.7%	Prefer not to say

## What activities have you done in the Alberni Valley in the last 12 months. (% of total respondents)

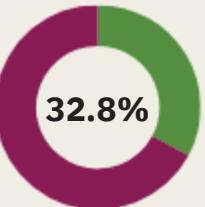


## \$78,850 Canada Council for the Arts grants

National arts and council grants are awarded each year to support local arts initiatives. Since 2017, Alberni Valley artists were awarded six grants.<sup>5</sup>

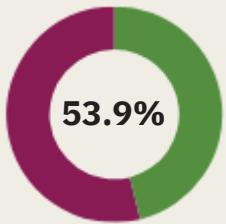


# Belonging & Leadership



## Voter Turnout - Municipal

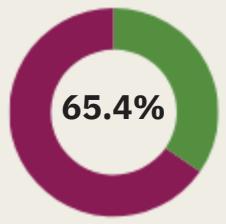
The 2022 municipal election saw decreased voter turnout over the 2018 election: 32.8% of registered voters took to the polls in 2022, compared to 45.6% in 2018.<sup>6, 7</sup>



## Voter Turnout - Provincial



The 2020 provincial election saw decreased voter turnout over the 2017 election: 53.86% of registered voters took to the polls in 2020, compared to 61% in 2017. The Mid-Island Pacific Rim riding, of which the Alberni Valley is a part, had a lower turnout of 54.45%, compared to 65.1% in 2017.<sup>8</sup>

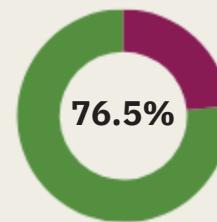


## Voter Turnout - Federal

The Courtenay-Alberni riding had 65.4% of eligible voters turnout in the 2021 federal election. This was a decrease from the 71.4% voter turnout seen during the 2019 federal elections. Nationally, 62.6% of eligible voters turned up at the polls in 2021 and 67.0% in 2019.<sup>9, 10</sup>

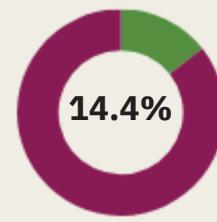
## 76 Number of registered nonprofits

There are 76 registered non-profits in the Alberni Valley. In 2018, there were 80 registered non-profits.<sup>11</sup>



## Sense of community belonging

More than three-quarters of Central Vancouver Island residents, which includes the Alberni Valley, reported a strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging in 2019-2020, an increase of 4.8% since 2015-2016. Provincially, 70.8% of residents feel they belong, compared to 70.0% nationally.<sup>12</sup>



## Percentage of tax filers making charitable donations

Tax filer data from 2020 indicates that 14.4% of Alberni Valley residents made a charitable donation. This compares to 17.4% of British Columbia residents and 17.7% of all Canadians. In the Alberni Valley, the median amount donated was \$390.<sup>13</sup>





# Children & Youth

## 4835 Number of children and youth

There are just under 5,000 children and youth 19 years and younger in the Alberni Valley. Children and youth comprise 18.8% of the population. Provincially, 19.4% of residents are under 19 years of age. Across Canada, 21.7% of the population is under 19 years old.<sup>1</sup>

### Vulnerability rate

38.0%

The latest Early Development Instrument (EDI) data shows that the vulnerability rate has increased, from 32% in 2013-2016 to 38% in 2016-2019. An examination of a child's first five years across five domains (physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognition, and communication) demonstrates that, without additional support, 38% of our youngest children may experience further challenges in both education and society.<sup>14</sup>

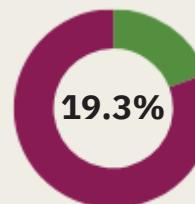
### Adults in the community

58.0%

The Middle Years Development Instrument asks students in Grade 4 and Grade 7 to reflect on their experiences at school, at home, and in the community. One of the questions queries connectedness, and asks Grade 4 and 7 to assess the quality of the relationships they have with adults in their neighbourhood or community. On this scale, 58% of Grade 4 and 50% Grade 7 students report having a high quality relationship with the adults they interact with in their neighbourhood or community. All responses exceed the provincial average.<sup>15, 16</sup>

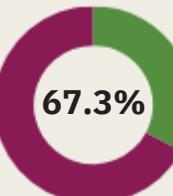
50.0%

### Child Poverty Rate

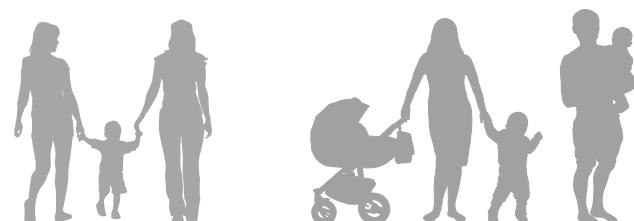


In Port Alberni (Census Agglomeration Area) in 2020, 19.3% of children and youth ages 0-17 years old lived in a low-income family, compared to 29% living in this area in 2017. *This decrease is likely linked to temporary CERB benefits and not indicative of long term poverty reduction.* Port Alberni still has the highest child poverty rate in the province (by Census Metropolitan Area and Census Agglomeration Area). In British Columbia in 2020, one in eight, or 13.3% of children and youth live in poverty.<sup>71</sup>

### Youth Mental Health



In 2019/2020, when asked to rate their mental health for the Canada Community Health Survey, 67.3% of youth ages 12-17 located in the Central Vancouver Island health services delivery area, which includes the Alberni Valley, rated their mental health as “very good” or excellent”, slightly less than the provincial average of 70.4% and the national average of 70.7%. Overall, there was a decrease in youth who rated their mental health as “very good” or “excellent” from the 2013-2016 Survey.<sup>12</sup>





# Environment

## 9.9ug/m<sup>3</sup> Air Quality



One measure for air quality is the concentration of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5). Fine particulate matter is a public health risk, causing lung and heart problems. Canada's Ambient Air Quality annual standard for PM2.5 is 10.0ug/m<sup>3</sup>, or 10.0 micrograms per cubic metre. In 2022, the Alberni Valley's annual average was 7.4ug/m<sup>3</sup>, as measured at the Alberni Elementary weather station, compared to 8.8ug/m<sup>3</sup> in 2019 and 9.9ug/m<sup>3</sup> in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

## 627L Daily water consumption per capita

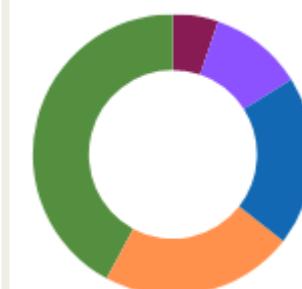
Metered water usage in the Alberni Valley is provided by the City of Port Alberni, Beaver Creek Water System, and the Cherry Creek Waterworks District. Daily average water consumption per capita for residents using water from the City of Port Alberni and the Beaver Creek Water system was 627 litres per capita, per day, an increase from 530 litres per capita in 2017 (all sites). The daily flow rate for Cherry Creek Waterworks District was 600m<sup>3</sup> in 2022.<sup>19, 20, 21</sup>

## 1721.8mm Average annual precipitation



Over the last 130 years, the average annual precipitation in the Alberni Valley was 1721.8mm. In the late 1990s, there was a maximum of 2765.5mm recorded. Most recently, in 2022, 1415.8mm of precipitation fell in the Alberni Valley.<sup>22</sup>

## Community Voices

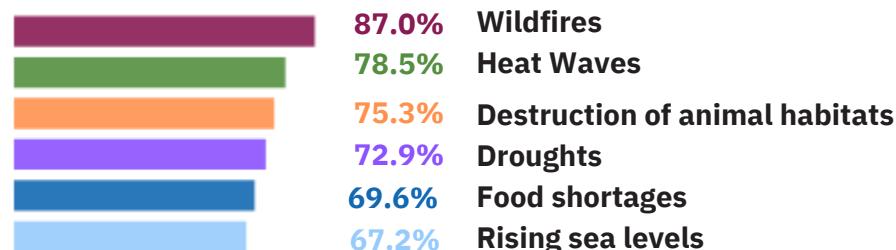


The Alberni Valley has adequate options for getting around (public & active transportation).



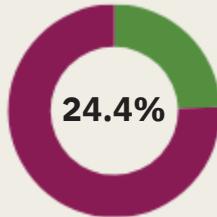
Do you have any concerns regarding climate change?

What are your concerns regarding climate change?  
(% of total respondents)





# Environment



## Waste diversion rate

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) collects household municipal solid waste from residents living in the City of Port Alberni, ACRD Electoral Areas within the Alberni Valley and Bamfield and First Nations communities Tseshah, Hupačasath, Huu-ay-aht and Uchucklesaht and processes it at the Alberni Valley Sort'n'Go Centre (formerly known as the Alberni Valley Landfill). In September 2021, they introduced 3-stream curbside collection to 6,700 single-family homes. In 2021, a total 5,088 tonnes of materials were diverted from landfilling, with 667 tonnes of organic material being diverted between September 13, 2021 and December 31, 2021. The overall diversion rate was 24.4% in 2021 and 31.8% in 2022.<sup>3</sup>



Image source: Alberni Valley Food Security Society



## Power of People

### Alberni Valley Transition Town Society

- The Alberni Valley Transition Town Society thanks the Community Foundation for its ongoing work producing the indispensable Vital Signs reports that provide such critical information and guidance.
- Thanks to the Vital Signs reports, we know the challenges today and the opportunities ahead of us. The effects of climate change have proven to be broad and the measures we must take will impact all of us in our society.
- The AVTTS has worked in the Alberni Valley on the unceded territories of Tseshah and Hupacasath First Nations for more than a decade to address climate change, reduce the need for fossil fuels, increase our access to local food, and create a more locally focused and resilient community. The work is far from done but we will continue to tackle it with humility, vigour and purpose.<sup>24</sup>



Image source: Alberni Valley Transition Town

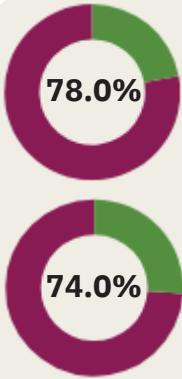


# Food

## \$1343 Cost of healthy eating



The average monthly cost of food for a family of four in 2022, as outlined in the *Food Costing 2022* report, was \$1,343 for Central Vancouver Island, of which Port Alberni is included. This is less than the average for the Island Health region of \$1,366, but more than the average for all of BC, which was \$1,263. This is not comparable to the *Food Costing 2017* report as the methodology has changed. *Canada's Food Price Report 2023* expects food prices will continue to rise (BC saw a 9.2% increase from 2021-2022) across the country as food input costs and transportation costs continue to rise.<sup>52, 6</sup>



### Meals with adults in your family

78% of Grade 4 students (77% in 2018) and 74% of Grade 7 students (consistent) in the Alberni Valley eat meals with their parents or adult family members 5 or more times per week, compared to 78% and 76%, respectively, across all school districts. 15% of Grade 4 students and 14% of Grade 7 students eat 2 or fewer meals with parents or adult family members each week, compared to 16% for both grades across all school districts.<sup>15, 16</sup>

## 76 Registered farms



There are 76 registered farms in Alberni-Clayoquot\*. This is down 18% from 2016 (93 farms). Of the registered farmers in the ACRD, 24 of them are less than 10 acres in size, and 13 are greater than 130 acres. 43 of them had a revenue of less than \$10,000, and only 6 had a revenue of over \$100,000. The average age of farmers in the ACRD was 60.7 years. 75% of farms have no succession plan.<sup>27</sup>

\*Note: this is not comparable to 2018, as this report uses the number of registered farms according to the ACRD.



## Community Voices



**I believe that the Alberni Valley region is food secure.**

42.86% Yes  
57.14% No



## Power of People

### Alberni Valley Food Security Society (AVFSS)

AVFSS (Alberni Valley Food Security Society) works towards increasing access to local food and strengthening food security and food sovereignty in the Alberni Valley through the establishment of partnerships and the promotion of inter-agency collaborations. They recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of The Gleaning Project, which resulted in an impressive estimate of 72,000 pounds of fruit gleaned over the course of a decade.

Additionally, they offered 18 newfood skills workshops, invested \$15,000 in local food initiatives, and provided over 130 Food Rx boxes to families in need. The Food Rx program is a collaborative effort that aims to provide local, healthy food to individuals facing a high risk of food insecurity. Recipients receive weekly food boxes containing recipes carefully selected by a dietitian, along with community resource information and approximately \$100 worth of locally grown or processed food. These programs are reliant on AVFSS obtaining short term grants.<sup>28</sup>



# Food

## 147 BC Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program (FMNCP) Participant Households

The FMNCP is a food literacy and security initiative of the BC Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM), with support from community partner organizations, that provide coupons to low-income families, pregnant people, and seniors to purchase fresh produce, eggs, fish, nuts, meat, dairy, and honey from qualified vendors at participating BCAFMs farmersmarkets.

In 2022, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Island Health Port Alberni, and Sage Haven Society were the community partners that supported 147 FMNCP participant households (363 people total within these households) in Port Alberni at the Spirit Square Farmers Market. 69 participants were Elders or seniors, 53 identified as First Nations and 2 as Metis, 8 were pregnant, and 135 were under 18 years old. The Spirit Square Farmers Market accepted 8,752 coupons (worth \$26,256.00) directly to Port Alberni farmer vendors<sup>92</sup>.



Image source: Alberni Valley Food Security Society

## Salmon Capital of the World



Port Alberni has been designated as the Salmon Capital of the World and the World Fishing Network's Ultimate Fishing Town. The Somass River watershed covers over 1,400sqkm and includes three salmon-producing tributaries (Ash, Taylor, and the Stamp Rivers) and several large lakes. The adjacent Alberni Inlet is 60km long and includes four commercial salmon species - sockeye, chinook, chum, and coho. The sockeye salmon run in 2022 was forecast to be almost 1 million fish. The chinook run was forecast at 135,000. In 2022, Hupacasath and Tseshahat fishermen harvested approximately 90,000 sockeye salmon and 37,000 chinook salmon for economic purposes. 16,983 chinook salmon were caught by recreational boats (including tourists)<sup>72</sup>.



## Power of People

### Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

The ACRD's System Change project sets out to test a regional model for food system and agricultural support. Strong regional structures will influence Provincial frameworks and ensure accommodation of the unique contextual realities of BC's various geographical regions and producer populations.

By bridging and supporting local organizations, building a BC-wide network of other regionally-driven organizations, and engaging in targeted education and resource development, we will support change in the way producers, Indigenous stakeholders, and communities are supported within Province-wise agricultural frameworks, ensuring efficacy, long-term sectoral growth, and diverse cultural relevancy.<sup>72</sup>



# Getting Started in Our Community

## 346 Net migration



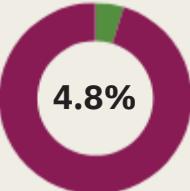
Between 2021 and 2022, 346 more people moved to the Alberni Valley than left the Valley. These newcomers comprise 1.3% of the total population. In 2016, net migration was +1.4%.<sup>30</sup>

## 27 Language spoken



In addition to English and French, Alberni Valley residents speak 27 languages at home. The most frequently spoken non-official languages are Punjabi, Korean, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Spanish, Tagalog, Afrikaans, Italian, and Vietnamese.<sup>1</sup>

## Visible minority



The proportion of residents that belong to a visible minority has stayed the same since 2016. The largest visible minority groups in the Alberni Valley are South Asian and Chinese. Provincially, 34.4% of residents belong to a visible minority, up from 30.3% in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

*Note: Visible minority data does not include Indigenous Peoples.*



## New residents 2021<sup>1</sup>



## New residents 2016-2021<sup>1</sup>



**80.0%** From within the province  
**15.5%** From another Canadian province  
**4.5%** From outside of Canada

**83.7%** From within the province  
**12.6%** From another Canadian province  
**3.7%** From outside of Canada



## Community Voices

**When someone new moves onto my street, they are welcomed into the neighbourhood.**



<b>10.4%</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>44.8%</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>16.7%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>3.8%</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>24.3%</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>0.0%</b>	<b>Prefer not to say</b>



# Health & Wellness

## 79 Life expectancy

Life expectancy, or the number of years a person can expect to live, is a key measure of wellness. Someone born in Local Health Area 70 (Alberni LHA) can reasonably expect to live to 79.0 years old, which is the same from 2018. This is lower than the provincial life expectancy of 82.6 years.<sup>31</sup>

## 9 of 10 Chronic disease prevalence rate

Rates of chronic prevalent disease in the Alberni LHA are higher than the provincial average in 10 categories: heart failure, Alzheimer's disease and other dementia, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), episodic asthma, diabetes, osteoarthritis, asthma, and hypertension. The only disease that appears less frequently in the Alberni LHA than in the province is ischemic heart disease.<sup>32</sup>

## 79.7% Residents attached to a primary care practitioner

In the Alberni LHA, there were 101 physicians, 54 specialists, and 95 supplementary practitioners for 100,000 residents, compared to 112 physicians, 94 specialists, and 133 supplementary practitioners per 100,000 residents provincially.<sup>31, 33</sup>

## 26 Illicit drug toxicity deaths

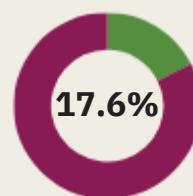
In 2022, there were 26 illicit drug toxicity deaths in the Alberni LHA. In 2022, British Columbia saw 2,272 illicit drug toxicity deaths. Illicit fentanyl was detected (alone or in combination with other drugs) in 82% of illicit drug toxicity deaths in the province in 2022\*.<sup>4</sup>

*\*Note: this number will change as further toxicology results are received*

## 9.8 Birth rate

The overall birth rate for Alberni-Clayoquot (9.8) is higher than Island Health (8.3 per 1,000 population) and the provincial birth rate (9.4 per 1,000).<sup>32</sup>

## Perceived life stress



In 2020, 17.6% of Central Vancouver Island residents, which includes the Alberni Valley, reported perceiving that most days in their life were quite a bit or extremely stressful. This is a decrease from 2016, when 18.2% reported the same. Provincially, 20.6% of British Columbians in 2020 reported quite a bit or extremely stressful days.<sup>12</sup>



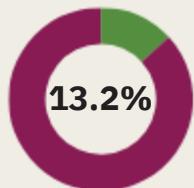


# Health & Wellness

## Community Voices

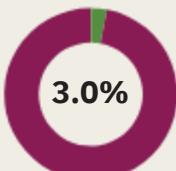
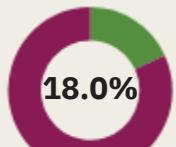
### Smoking rate

The smoking rate for the population 12 years and older in Central Vancouver Island has decreased every year since 2007-2008. The most recent rate, from 2019-2020, was 13.2%, a decrease from the 2015-2016 rate of 14.8%. Provincially, the rate was 10.6% and nationally, it was 13.9% in 2019-2020. Among the adult population (18+) within the Alberni LHA, 16.0% smoke or vape daily/occasionally.<sup>12, 32</sup>



### Infant health

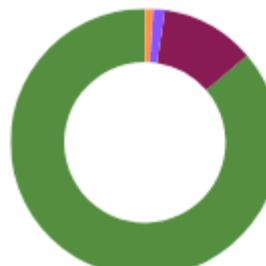
18% of births were preterm births in 2020. A preterm birth refers to the delivery of a baby before completing 37 weeks of gestation. These births occur when the baby's development is not fully complete, which can lead to various health complications and a higher risk of infant mortality. 3% of newborns were of low birth weight in 2020. Low birth weight refers to babies born weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds). This can occur in both full-term and preterm births.<sup>33</sup>



### 2.3 Alcoholic drinks per capita per day

Residents of the Alberni LHA consume 2.3 standard alcoholic drinks per capita per day, compared to 1.5 per capita per day provincially. 31.5% of the adult population binge drinks, compared to 27.8% in the Island Health region, and 27.1% in BC.<sup>31, 33</sup>

### Do you have a family doctor?



86.3%  
11.3%  
1.0%  
1.4%

Yes  
No, but I would like one  
No and I don't want one  
Prefer not to say

### I receive timely access to the health care services that I need.



11.5%  
46.3%  
25.1%  
11.5%  
4.9%  
0.7%

Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Don't know  
Prefer not to say



### Mood disorders

In the Alberni LHA, 35.3% of residents have a diagnosed mood or anxiety disorder. This is higher than the Island Health rate (34.3%) and the provincial rate (30.2%).<sup>32</sup>



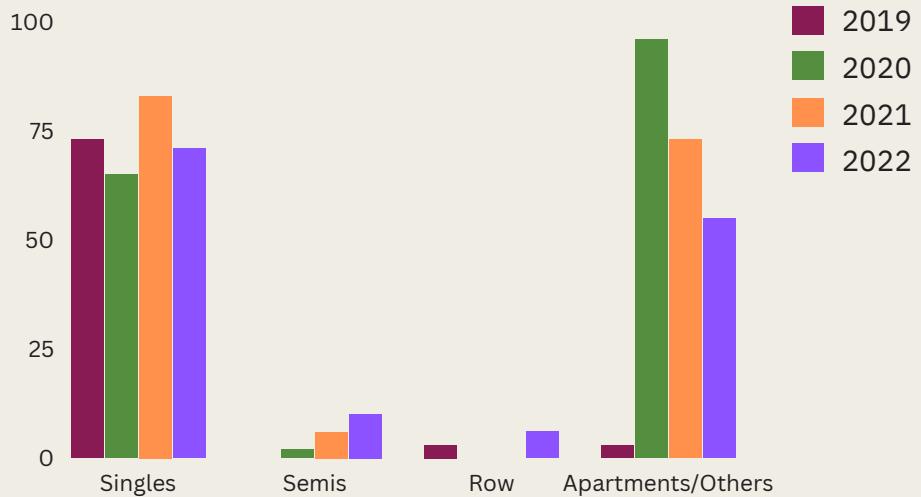
# Housing

## \$520,700 Benchmark home price



The benchmark sale price of a single-family home in May 2023 in the Alberni Valley was \$520,700 – down 12 per cent from the previous year. On North Vancouver Island, the benchmark price of a single-family home decreased by three per cent to \$414,700.<sup>35</sup>

## 142 New housing units by dwelling type<sup>36</sup>



## \$800, \$960 Median monthly shelter costs

Median monthly shelter costs include mortgage or rent payments, electricity, heat, water, and other municipal services. In the Alberni Valley, homeowners pay a median monthly shelter cost of \$800, a 14.1% increase from 2018, while renters pay \$960, a 28.2% increase from 2018.<sup>37</sup>

## Renter households

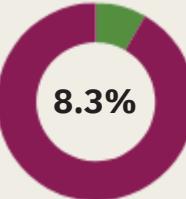


Of the 11,415 households in the Alberni Valley, 3,005 or 26.3% are renter households. This is a negligible decrease, from 26.7% in 2018. The remainder are owned. Provincially, 33.3% of households are renter households.<sup>38</sup>

## Rental vacancy rate

The rental vacancy rate in the Alberni Valley has decreased every year since 2011. It is currently 1.7%. British Columbia's rental vacancy rate is 1.3%, while Canada's is 3.0%.<sup>39</sup>

## Proportion of units requiring major repair



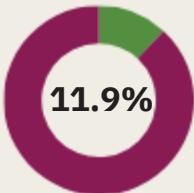
Between 2016 and 2020, the proportion of Alberni Valley housing units requiring major repair decreased from 9.0% to 8.3%. Across the province, there has also been a decrease, from 7.2% in 2016 to 5.8% in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

## 11 Number of beds in women's and children's transition house

There are 11 beds for women and children in the transition house operated by Sage Haven Society and funded by BC Housing. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Transition House provided 1,002 bed stays for women and children at risks of or fleeing domestic violence.<sup>40</sup>

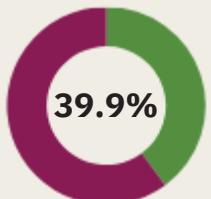


# Housing



## Proportion of homeowners spending more than 30% of their income on housing

Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are at risk of homelessness. In the Alberni Valley, 11.9% of homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared to 19.3% of homeowners in BC and 14.8% across Canada.<sup>1</sup>

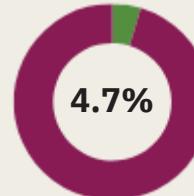


## Proportion of tenants spending more than 30% of their income on housing

Households in this category are at risk of homelessness. 39.9% of tenant households in the Alberni Valley spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared to 37.8% of tenant households in BC and 33.2% across Canada. This is a decrease in all locations from 2016, likely linked to temporary CERB benefits.<sup>1</sup>

## 23 Number of beds in emergency shelter

The emergency shelter in the Alberni Valley is designed to assist clients with accessing the resources that can help them end their homelessness such as health services, housing support, income assistance and employment programs. It has 23 emergency shelter beds for temporary accommodation, meals, showers and laundry facilities. The Emergency Shelter Program is a 24-hour, year-round shelter for individuals and families.<sup>41</sup>



## Core housing need

4.7% of homeowners are in core housing need in Port Alberni, compared to 27.7% of tenant households in 2020. In BC, 8.0% of homeowners and 24.7% of tenant households are in core housing need, compared to 5.3% of homeowners and 20.0% of tenant households in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

## Defining core housing need

"Core housing need refers to whether a private household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (attains all three housing indicator thresholds)."<sup>1</sup>

## 125 Homeless count

Port Alberni's homeless population was counted on April 6th and 7th in 2021. The minimum number of people experiencing homelessness was 125 compared to 147 in 2018. 58% of individuals were sheltered and 42% were unsheltered.<sup>42</sup>



# Community Voices

The Alberni Valley contains a variety of housing options to meet community needs.



3.2%      Strongly Agree  
27.1%      Agree  
37.7%      Disagree  
11.6%      Strongly Disagree  
20.1%      Don't know  
0.4%      Prefer not to say

Homelessness is taken seriously in the Alberni Valley.



4.5%      Strongly Agree  
39.4%      Agree  
29.3%      Disagree  
12.2%      Strongly Disagree  
14.3%      Don't know  
0.4%      Prefer not to say

## Power of People

### Alberni Low Energy Housing Society

Maitland Street Village, an Alberni Low Energy Housing Society initiative, was built in partnership with B.C. Housing through funding provided by the provincial and federal governments.

This apartment complex is a highly energy efficient all-electric building that meets Step 4 of the B.C. Energy Step Code, and is net zero ready. The design of Maitland Street Village yields cost savings and year-round comfort for tenants, with insuite heat pumps providing heating and cooling and a robust HVAC system that creates a healthy indoor environment.

The utility cost for a typical 3 bedroom/2-bathroom suite is approximately \$50 every two months. Maitland Street Village offers 46 one, two, and three-bedroom suites with rental rates determined by tenant income. Most of the one-bedroom suites are fully accessible if people have mobility issues. Sustainability features of this project include community gardens, a rainwater harvesting system, native plant gardens and a bioswale. EV charging stations are available for tenant use.<sup>43</sup>

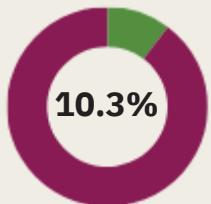


Image sources: Alberni Low Energy Society



# Income Gap

## Overall poverty rate



Using the Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status, 10.3% of Alberni Valley residents lives in poverty in 2020. This is a large decrease of ten percentage points since 2018, *but this includes temporary CERB benefits*. In British Columbia, the overall poverty rate is 9.8%, and in Canada, 8.1%.<sup>44</sup>

*Note: This is not directly comparable to the data in our 2018 report, which uses a different measure of poverty.*

## Income sources for population aged 15 years and older<sup>1</sup>

### Market income

- 53.7% Employment income
- 3.9% Investment income
- 11.5% Private retirement income



### Government transfers

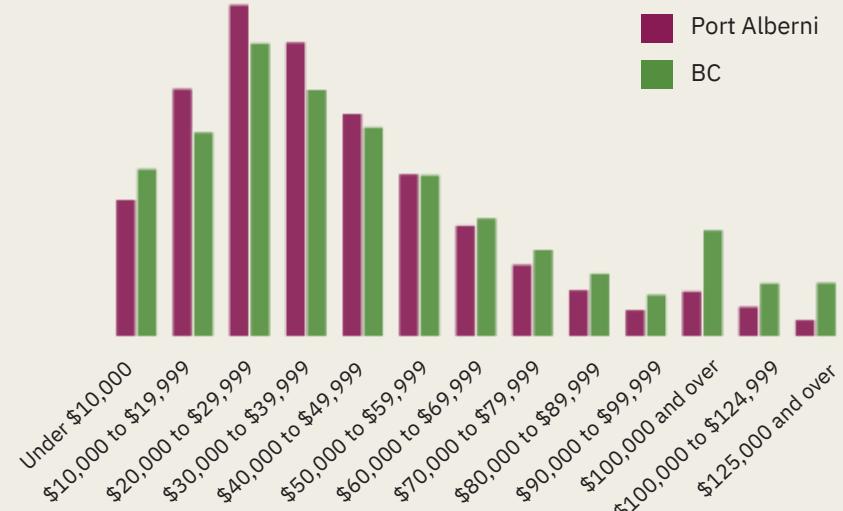
- 6.4% Old age security pension and guaranteed income supplement
- 7.2% Canada pension plan and/or Quebec pension plan
- 1.7% Employment insurance (EI) benefits
- 2.2% Child benefits
- 2.2% COVID-19 – Government income support and benefits

**\$58,000**

## Median income of one-parent economic families, after tax

The median income of Alberni Valley one-parent economic families has increased since 2018, when it was \$37,632. The province's median income of lone parent families (after tax) is \$65,000 and the country's is \$64,000.<sup>1</sup> Note: CERB payments inflated 2020 incomes.

## After-tax income of households, by decile<sup>1</sup>

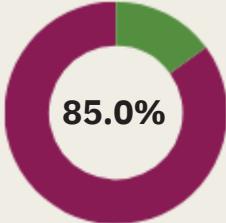


**\$17.00 - \$19.60** Living wage

The *Building Prosperity in the Alberni-Clayoquot - Poverty Reduction Action Plan* estimates that the living wage was between \$17.00 and \$19.60 (depending on the community within the ACRD) in 2019.<sup>45</sup>

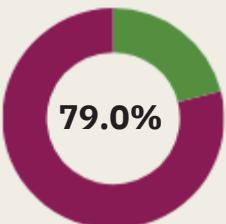


# Learning



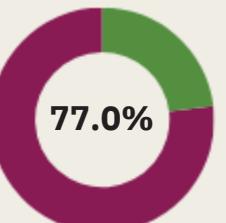
## High School Completion Rate

Data from the British Columbia Ministry of Education demonstrates that the six-year high school completion rate has increased by 11 percent, from 74.0% in 2016-2017 to 85% in 2021-22 in School District #70. This compares to 91% provincially.<sup>46, 47</sup>



## Indigenous High School Completion Rate

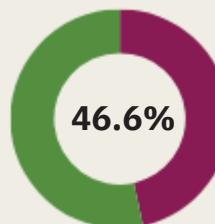
The six-year high school completion rate for Indigenous students has increased by more than 20%, from 56.0% in 2016-2017 to 79% in 2021-22 in School District #70. This compares to 75% provincially.<sup>46, 47</sup>



## Diverse Abilities High School Completion Rate

The six-year high school completion rate for students with diverse abilities was 77% in 2021-22 in both School District #70 and the province. Diverse abilities refers to the differing physical, cognitive, learning, developmental, etc. abilities that students may have and is used in place of the word disability.

<sup>46, 47</sup>



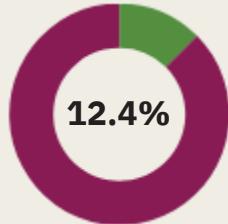
## Transition to post-secondary

The post-secondary transition rate provides the proportion of high school graduates that transition to a post-secondary institute within three years of graduation. 46.6% of School District #70 students who graduated in 2015/2016 transition to postsecondary, compared to 52.2% provincially. Of those who did not graduate high school, 7.7% of School District #70 students still ended up transitioning to post-secondary school, compared to 3.9% provincially.<sup>48, 49</sup>





# Learning



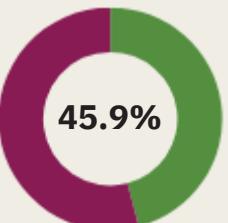
## Education in the trades

In the Alberni Valley, 12.4% of the population ages 15 and over has an education in the trades. This is a decrease from 2018 at 13.2% but is significantly higher than the province, at 7.7%, and the country, at 8.7%.<sup>1</sup>

**\$4,789**

## Average annual cost of undergraduate domestic tuition

Vancouver Island University is the closest public university. Tuition has increased since our last report: it was \$4261 in 2014- 2015, and was \$4,798 in the 2022-2023 academic year.<sup>50</sup>



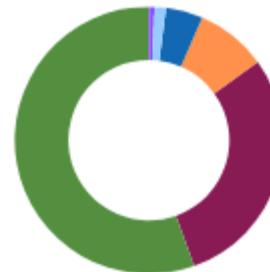
## Percentage of population with post-secondary education

In the Alberni Valley, 45.9% of the population 15 years and older has post-secondary education. This is an increase from 2016's rate of 44.7%. This indicator has been increasing every year since 2001. Provincially, 57.1% of the population 15 years and older has a post-secondary education.<sup>1</sup>



# Community Voices

**In the past year, I have increased my own well-being and life satisfaction by learning.**



<b>29.5%</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>55.5%</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>8.6%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>0.7%</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>4.5%</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>1.4%</b>	<b>Prefer not to say</b>

**What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?**



<b>72.3%</b>	<b>Post-Secondary</b>
<b>27.7%</b>	<b>Secondary</b>





# Recreation

## 44,592 Admissions to Echo Aquatic Centre & Fitness Studio

In 2022, 44,592 visits to the Echo Aquatic Centre & Fitness Studio were recorded by the City of Port Alberni. In 2017, Port Alberni recreation facilities saw 85,341 visits.<sup>51</sup>

## 140 kms of Trails

There are at least 140km of trail in the Alberni Valley. Trails have been built on land owned by the City of Port Alberni, the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District, and on private and industrial land. 125.9km of trail are operated by the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District and 22.5km are operated by the City of Port Alberni. Many trails have also been built by volunteers<sup>52, 53</sup>



## Outdoor activities



The Alberni Valley is the place to be for those with an adventurous spirit. There is ample access to fishing (it's not known as the Salmon Capital of the World for nothing), camping, surfing, paddling, scuba diving, golfing, waterskiing, wakeboarding, hiking, mountain biking, swimming, river tubing, windsurfing, and kiteboarding.<sup>54</sup>

## 27 Parks and outdoor community spaces

77.1% of people who live in Port Alberni live within 1km walking distance to a park. The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District owns and/or operates six regional parks and 25 community parks while the City of Port Alberni has 27 parks and outdoor community spaces. The Alberni Valley is home to four provincial parks: Fossli Provincial Park, Sproat Lake Provincial Park, Stamp River Provincial Park, and Taylor Arm Provincial Park.<sup>55, 56, 57, 58</sup>

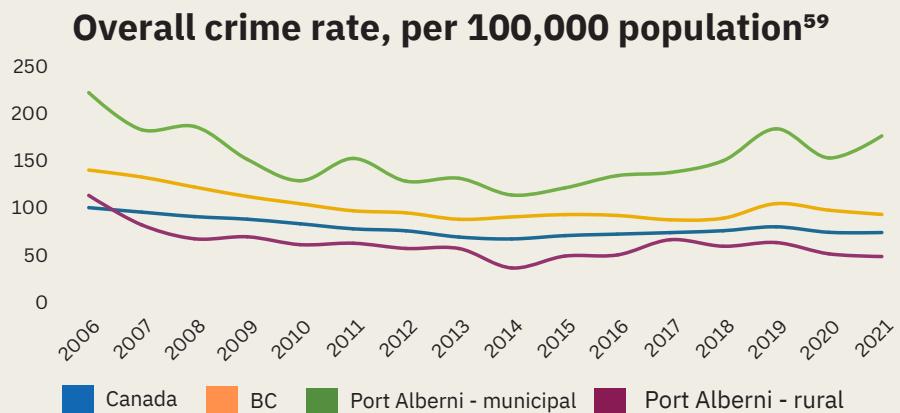




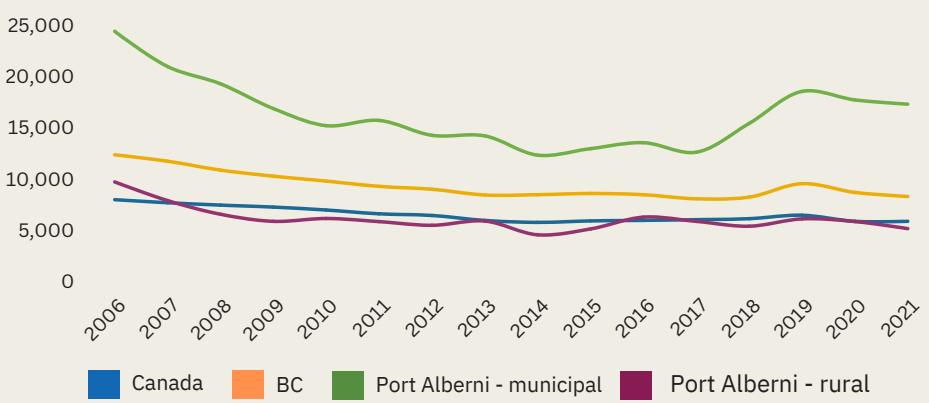
# Safety



# Community Voices



**Crime severity index, per 100,000 population<sup>60</sup>**



## 192.1 Sexual assault rate, per 100,000 population

In 2021, the sexual assault rate in Port Alberni was 192.1, compared to 86.8 for British Columbia, and 89.5 for Canada. Caution should be taken, though; the majority of sexual assaults are not reported, so obtaining an accurate number is difficult.<sup>61</sup>

I feel safe in the Alberni Valley.



- 73.2% Yes
- 22.7% No
- 4.1% Prefer not to say

There are adequate crime prevention measures in place here.



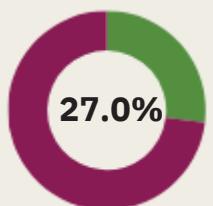
- 1.37% Strongly Agree
- 29.21% Agree
- 32.99% Disagree
- 12.03% Strongly Disagree
- 24.40% Don't know
- 0.00% Prefer not to say

## 8486.5 Property crime rate, per 100,000 population

In 2021, the municipal property crime rate in Port Alberni was 8486.5 per 100,000 population. The rate has been increasing since 2014, with a sharp uptick from 2017 to 2019, but has been decreasing since 2019. Similarly, the rural property crime rate in Port Alberni was 2101.0 in 2021, following the overall trend of decreasing crime rates since 2019. Across British Columbia, the rate of property crime has been decreasing since 2019, with the provincial rate in 2021 being 4216.0.<sup>59</sup>

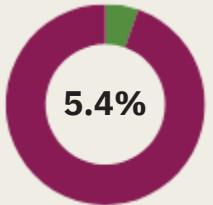


# Seniors



## Senior Population

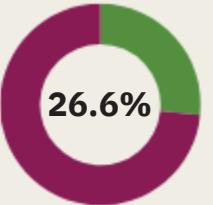
Over one-quarter of the Alberni Valley's population, or 27%, is comprised of seniors ages 65 years and greater. This is a significant increase from 2018, when 24% of the population was 65 years and greater. Provincially, 23%, and nationally, 19% of the population is 65 years and greater.<sup>1</sup>



## Senior Poverty Rate



Senior poverty rates have decreased across the province since 2018. In 2021, 5.4% of seniors in Port Alberni were in poverty as per the Individual Market Basket Measure. Across the province, 6.4% of seniors live in poverty, compared to 4.7% of seniors nationally.<sup>44</sup>



## Percentage of senior population living alone

In Port Alberni, 26.6% of seniors live alone, compared to 27.4% in 2018. Seniors who live alone often report higher rates of social isolation than seniors who live with someone else. Across BC, 23.2% of seniors live alone.<sup>62</sup>



# Community Voices

**Seniors have a good standard of living in the communities of the Alberni Valley.**



**11.2%**

**Strongly Agree**

**44.8%**

**Agree**

**14.7%**

**Disagree**

**2.8%**

**Strongly Disagree**

**25.9%**

**Don't know**

**0.7%**

**Prefer not to say**

## Increase senior population projection



In the Alberni-Clayoquot Local Health Area (LHA), the 75+ age group is expected to have the highest growth rate over the next 20 years. Its population is projected to more than double from 2,817 in 2019 to 6,239, while the 65-74 year age group is anticipated to initially increase and then decline.<sup>32</sup>





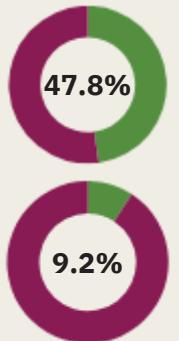
# Work & Economy



## How the labour force commutes



Of the 9375 people employed in the labour force in Port Alberni, **89.9%** use an automobile to commute to work, **1.7%** use public transit, and **8.4%** used active transit or other modes of commuting.<sup>1</sup>



## Employment and unemployment rates

There has been little change in employment or unemployment rates since 2016. Data from the 2021 census notes that the employment rate has fallen slightly from 48.2% to **47.8%**, and unemployment has decreased from 10.2% to **9.2%**. Provincially, the employment rate is 57.6% and the unemployment rate is 8.4%.<sup>1</sup>

## \$57,600 Median employment income



The median full-time, full-year employment income in the Alberni Valley is \$57,600, with men earning nearly \$14,000 more, at \$65,000, and women earning \$13,800 less, at \$51,200. In British Columbia, the median employment income is \$65,500, or \$71,500 for men and \$57,600 for women.<sup>1</sup>

## 366 Annual average EI benefits beneficiaries

In the Alberni Valley, an average of 366 people received Employment Insurance (EI) benefits per month in 2022 (seasonally adjusted), a decrease from 474 in 2017. This represents 2.9% of the labour force. In British Columbia, 1.6% of the labour force, and 2.4% in Canada, also received EI benefits in 2022.<sup>63</sup>

# Community Voices

## Ample entry-level job opportunities exist in the Alberni Valley.



<b>9.0%</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>42.4%</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>13.8%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>3.1%</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>31.7%</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>0.0%</b>	<b>Prefer not to say</b>

## Ample professional job opportunities exist in the Alberni Valley.



<b>2.8%</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>25.8%</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>27.8%</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>5.5%</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>38.1%</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>0.0%</b>	<b>Prefer not to say</b>

## 1,825 Number of self-employed individuals

There are 1,825 self-employed individuals in the Alberni Valley, comprising 15.9% of the labour force. Provincially 17.3% of the labour force is self-employed, and 14.1% of the national labour force is self-employed.<sup>1</sup>

## 63 New business licenses throughout 2022-2023<sup>64</sup>

# Sources

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## THANK YOU

Thank you to all of the survey respondents, subject matter experts, and other individuals that contributed to this report. You are deeply appreciated.

## CONTACT

### **Alberni Valley Community Foundation**

4255 Wallace Street, Port Alberni  
BC V9Y 3Y6

Phone: 250-724-4503  
Email: [info@albernidfoundation.ca](mailto:info@albernidfoundation.ca)  
Website: [albernidfoundation.ca](http://albernidfoundation.ca)



*The Alberni Valley  
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